

NOTES

DISTRICT COMMANDERS CONFERENCE

28-29 Oct 1999

Chief's Opening Comments

Build an integrated approach; that's why we're emphasizing the Project Delivery *Team*
Regarding the round table discussion topics:

- How are RBMs working? How can we improve them?
- Where do we need to go regarding a future culture?
- What's working in Outreach? How can we improve it?
- Do we have the workforce capability to meet tomorrow's challenges?
- Corporately, how do we revolutionize procurement?
- What's your assessment of the IT needs?

I want to get a more integrated team from top [HQ USACE] to bottom [individual]
We will reorganize the HQ. I want seamless operations from HQ through the Field

Questions and Comments:

The CIO is good! This area is ripe for improving efficiencies in the Districts.

Chief: We need to think corporately in our approach today. Recent audit indicates many opportunities for improvement.

A few years ago we had an IG report on our business processes. We need to do it again to check our progress and assess whether we are on track.

Chief: We're getting better but we can improve more. The IG will continue to help along with internal reviews and command inspections.

Has our experience in FUSRAP opened any more doors in DOE?

Chief: This is a "shining spot" in our efforts with DOE. It has proven we can work across organizations within the Corps. DOE has noticed our performance. We're in a dialogue with DOE for more work. More importantly, how we've worked has been a real benefit.

Is there any guidance on the CSA emphasis on recruiting?

Chief: We play a bigger role than just real estate for recruiting stations. There are R&D applications, MP—installation level power projection. We need to insure the Army understands how we are involved. On the ground, in future conflicts, we'll continue to have contractors and real estate capability. Read the CSA's vision. We still need a focus on the ground.

Any changes in your expectations other than the six mentioned in our initial command letters from you?

Chief: Still do those six. Continue to make your own organization as efficient and effective as possible. Now, however, look outside to find ways you can contribute to the overall corporate and division efforts. Improve the "sweet spot" in the venn diagram.

Any quick mandates for us?

Chief: No, keep going—press on!

We have a cultural resistance on becoming more competitive particularly with A-76 studies.
What's the current philosophy?

Chief: Actually, there has been a change in the OMB guidance that now allows agencies to consider using other governmental agencies—not just private. In order for other agencies (Army!) to consider the Corps, we have to continue to perform. We'll put our more guidance on A-76.

Panel Discussion

1391 process. Need to become involved with the ACSIM in this discussion since Congress looks at them. District commanders need to energize and reinvigorate the process. The 1391 process is being automated. Commanders need to be involved with installation and garrison commanders early in the development of installation 1391s so they are accurate and reflect the installation/garrison commanders' future facility needs. This becomes problematic when the potential project is below the DE's traditional "attention/priority" line. In these cases, the DE's don't typically sign these 1391s.

Air Force can execute projects earlier in the fiscal year than the Army does.

What's so revolutionary about reducing costs and speeding responsiveness? Customers aren't impressed with our initiatives today!

HQ: We're looking at doing more consolidated and corporate contracting rather than allowing *each* district to struggle district by district to rediscover what others may have done. Also, the overall procurement process is too laborious. We're looking where it might be streamlined.

We have to be careful about upgrading positions. It can be a real problem today. Upgrading one discipline today engenders rancor among people in other disciplines. Overall, there may be too many high graded people.

HQ: HQUSACE is currently directing a study of grades across the Corps.

For incentive contracting, look at current practices and contractor needs to provide initial incentive fees, stipends, etc.

Using other District's contracting mechanisms works but we don't get credit for going corporate. Also, CEFMS won't account for multiple District involvement yet. There are still more system disincentives than incentives for our own people.

It seemed that previously, CW customers didn't want to be treated as customers rather as partners, so they didn't want to participate in "customer" satisfaction surveys. Now, we're using more meetings with customers to gauge performance.

Proceed on your projects *without* WRDA '99 implementation guidance from HQ. Draft guidance is now being worked and, unlike years previously, the intent is to free up the district activities, not limit them.

There is a problem with how carryovers are perceived. There are many reasons, other than the schedule wasn't met for why carryovers happen.

Round Table Notes

Regional Business Centers

What's Working?

- RMB is a good forum
- COB review
- Workload leveling
- Standardize practices
- Increased options

What to Improve?

- Focus on regional issues, need more corporate thinking
- Look longer term. Not making decisions yet on the out years. Sometimes decisions too late.
- Engage earlier. "We're fighting the close battle, but not looking over the hill."
- Train RMB leaders/members
- Regional metrics
- Recognize where RMB doesn't have a role. Should be looking at programs and not getting down into the projects. RMB members are interjecting into the projects.

LTG Ballard: *I can see how RMB would get into resourcing, but execution of projects is strictly a District job.*

- Balance demands and costs. Nothing comes without a cost. RMB members are gone a lot. Need to train others to do their job when they are gone.

LTG Ballard: *RMB is a reality. Districts should be playing a role. How big is the balancing problem?*

- It is the spin-offs of task forces that end up taking so much time. Begins to snow ball. Total time commitment for RMB is about one month out of the year for RMB.

Revolutionize Procurement

Going well:

- Regional contracts. Vehicles in place. Example: contracts for ice and water.
- Sufficient authorities: Districts finding creative ways of utilizing what is available. Looking at more flexibility at the local lever.
- PMBP: Acquisition Plan and Contracting

Need help in:

- Sharing ideas: continue to develop vehicle to share. Requires good documentation that can be shared.
- PARC notes are improving.
- Need WEB-based environment, but at embryonic stage. Districts can not leverage as well as they should. Need ideas on method, not end result.
- We are having a road show. Will re-initiate PARC conference in spring. Share ideas across agencies.
- Goals need to relate to Performance objective..... need to be realistic. Be careful not to raise the bar too much.
- Diversity floors reflect regional differences.
- Cross-boundary contracts: how have you aligned incentives? What behaviors are you promoting?

Outreach and Strategic Relationships

What's working?

- Collaboration is working
- Training is a success
- Outreach efforts succeed when effort is applied

What to improve?

- Communicate: success stories; the “plan” and strategic customers; customer info via “one door” data base
- Synchronize efforts top to bottom—“zippering” Synchronized Plan: need communication between Divisions and other agencies. Some agencies’ “borders” don’t correlate with ours.
- Performance Metrics: don’t have what is needed. Need to tailor surveys for customers. Need to find out how we are doing. But, customer satisfaction is not the only measures. Also, should not measure just new work.
- Funding mechanisms: larger Districts can fund outreach efforts better than some of the smaller Districts who do not have the depth to have full-time marketing person.
- Also need to include funding package as part of the proposal and how they can get funding.
- Planning: not everyone has an outreach plan or training plans. Need some sort of incentive, like monetary award to reinforce efforts.
- Incentives—recognize success

LTG Ballard: *ELCers researched team awards and made recommendation that team awards be left up to the Districts to determine.*

LTG Ballard: *What did you mean about packaging?*

Answer: funding....we need to understand how locals can get their money. We need to educate them and help them. One major problem is that customers don’t think they have to pay in advance.

Capable Workforce

Strategic Issues:

- Aging workforce/succession planning. Average age: 45-47. The big question: how to ensure we have a capable workforce!
- Identification of future target skills.
- Hiring, training, recruitment, workplace
- Classification system (CPOC issue)

What's working:

- Mission is being accomplished.
- We do have some vehicles to plug in to.
- Work ethic

Obstacles:

- OPM rules and regulations hinder recruitment.
- Retention of skills: especially technical. We have to contract out because we can not compete in salaries.
- Insufficient resources for HTRW
- Initial and sustained training for PMBP.

Recommendations:

- Corporate recruitment strategy; need POC at region and HQs, not just District.
- Invest in IM knowledge transfer system.
- Launch Program Delivery Team registry of capabilities; Div wide use of people; plus central data base.
- Make CPOC responsive to commanders.

Note: Doing a registry of skills now. Have package of professional handouts. Can request them from HR. Corps Path can be used.

LTG Ballard: *Corps Path will be institutionalized. You will all get it. Need to be trained on it. Capable Workforce and Procurement are most important of all initiatives. Most of you do not know how to get folks. You turn it over to your civilians and you get what you get. I am trying to get the Division Commanders to embrace selection of GS 14-15s. You all have the rest of it. You have the capability to bring in new talent. It is up to you. You are not doing anything to hire and to retain. You all aren't doing it and some of your civilian leaders don't have the courage to go outside District to hire. Same thing with the interns. Districts give little feedback on this. We plan to help you by doing the following: (1) use Gallop to help with the selection. You need to compete for your promotions. (2) CPOC is a problem. They screen out the non-locals. DEs need to get involved in the screening process. The CPOC is being paid to serve you. You can tell them what you want on the list. They should not be telling you. This is an emotional issue. This is critical....a capable workforce!*

Culture and Values

[“Culture & Values slides attached]

LTG Ballard: *I like what I heard. Right on. A little surprised about mobility.*

Participant: Experience is critical. Idea with mobility...if you stay in the District, it is bad. It takes years to develop long term relationships.

LTG Ballard: *If that is the case, then maybe DEs should be extended for 10 years. There is a value to both mobility and long term.*

Participant: The message is: mobility is good. Brings up new ideas, acts as a stimulant. But, there is a trade-off.

Participant: Hiring the best talent is the issue, not mobility. We should be hiring the best talent.

LTG Ballard: *Longevity has nothing to do with talent. If so, and you agree with that, then that long term person is running your District. If a person is good, then that should speak for itself. The point is: your job is to create an organization that has value to your customers.*

“Relationships” is a sub-set of what you do. If your PM is good, then your customer will come to you. We need to think about relationship sharing.

Participant: We need to hire people who are good at building relationships.

Technology Application

LTG Ballard: *It is a money sinkhole, a bottomless pit. Every District IT has their own fix. It is a tool to get us where we need to go. We need to map the IT process. Need to have continuity. I made the decision to centralize e-mail. People were upset when we went to Microsoft word. We need a corporate view: map out core processes and all will use. About to freeze dollars on Districts ability to buy their own wickets and gadgets. We will do this quickly. The question is: who is in the cart and who is pulling it. Contractors tell us they have a solution. We need to figure out core processes and map IT solution so we understand it. We can no longer afford to throw away our money on "fixes".*

Chief's Closing Comments and Discussion

Best of the Chief's four District Commanders Conferences. Presentations were interesting and gave food for thought.

RMB. Creating this was the most significant change. Though it's not yet working like I'd like it today. We will go back to the MSC commanders to get them to emphasize the things your mentioned (e.g., workload leveling). It's still frustrating to leave unexecuted money even though CW execution rate was much better this last FY. Need to execute even better. Execute as fast as you get the money. We have untapped capacity and still can't execute all we can. This is the "close-in" fight and it's the District's business. The RMB needs to look out more. I'll be getting prescriptive with the RMB.

Revolutionize Procurement. If procurement is broken in the district, then the district is broken! DEs need to get involved. The CO at the district level is the DE! Get involved and make it work. Small business "floors" is the law. We have to comply. You need HQ help in sharing ideas and innovations. We'll figure out how to address credit when two or more districts are involved in contracting.

Outreach. It's the future. We can't depend on Congress to provide for us. We're not "trolling" for customer! We're exploring and creating partnerships, non-traditional customer, and other government-in-kind work (e.g., TAC in Africa). I intend to grow outside work 10% - 15% per year. Funding is broken! How do we handle the money? We can now transfer money internally using the MIPR. Need to get around the "up front" money for projects. Districts need to work more with the labs; both need more collaboration. Tasking DCSRD to work this. We can use this collaboration to address HBCU/MI as well.

Capable Workforce. Single most contentious of my tenure Accusations against what we're trying to do. Growing relationships and aging workforce are problems in the Army, too. We need to replace an experienced workforce, 50% of who will be retiring in the next 5 years. DEs are responsible for their hiring and selecting.

Culture and Values Change. Mobility is an individual choice. We want to foster the notion that if you want to grow and advance, mobility is a must. At the GS-15 and SES level, mobility addresses our organizational needs.

Information Technology. This is not a business process, it's an enabler, a tool. We want efficient communication and we want common information that is top driven. IT will be corporate. Together we'll define our systems. The price we pay for IT today is too much!

Best Business Practices. Great idea! Keep doing it. We'll do it at ENFORCE in April, too. Learn from each other. You're all talking about the right things!